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The GREGORIAN REVIEW

Studies in Sacred Chant and Liturgy

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Bulletin of the School of Solesmes

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DIRECTORS

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Choirmaster of Solesmes

Auguste Le Guennant,
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June 22, 1956

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SIMPLE REFLECTIONS ON THE GREGORIAN ACCENT

by Rev. E. Mourey

I. A Brief Historical Summary

Before the Solesmes reform, the inequality of the Latin syllables was a universally accepted dogma.

The various "plain-chant" editions differed from one another on many points, but on that question they were completely in accord. It was asserted that this was a matter of prosody.

First came His Majesty, the *accented syllable*. This was *long*, strong, and vigorously stressed. It may be represented as it was viewed under this early concept as a quarter-note, musically speaking:



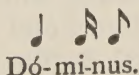
Next in importance was the *final syllable*, quite *short* and insignificant:



Lastly came the *penultimate of the "dactyl"* considered *very short*, corresponding to the sixteenth-note!

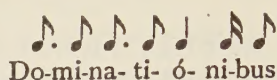


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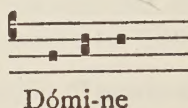


Working retroactively, the theory was applied to the secondary accents, about which practically nothing was known. For all intents and purposes, this ignorance caused

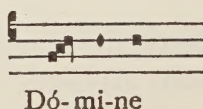
the “secondary accents” to be less maltreated than the main accent. In short, here is a systematic application of the theory:



Moreover, the respect of the accented syllable was carried to a point of mutilation of the others. “The dactylic penultimate should be sung to a single note”, regardless of what the manuscript might indicate. Therefore



was rendered



In other words, there was a completely false understanding of the quality of the accent!

*
* *

Dom Pothier unhesitatingly attacked the prevailing theory. To the great scandal of the leading lights of the day, he asserted that *all* the syllables of the Latin word, the dactylic penultimate included, had a uniform length. The accent was no exception. The final syllable presents a slight tendency to be long, a tendency which is actually produced at the end of the phrase sections, and which will, moreover, aid in clarifying the individual words.

In this light, then, what was the accent? It was a strong syllable, intended to supply the unity of the Latin word by gathering about it those which preceded it and those which followed it. Whether it was simply set or heavily orna-

mented with notes, it dominated everything around it and absorbed these surrounding elements into a superior element. It was *always given the strong beat*. At least that is what most of Dom Pothier's disciples understood, and they, in singing or accompanying, always stress the tonic accent, even when it is not set to any neume-group, and when the following weak penultimate has a more developed flourish.

Moreover, Dom Pothier did not like to "localize" the elements of the rhythm. The intuitive vision of Gregorian chant which he held, a true stamp of genius, went no further than the *greater rhythm*, that magnificent balance of the phrases and their subdivisions.

When he wrote in answer to a question, he first analyzed the elementary groupings, then leaped directly from that to the summary by saying: "To accent well, to phrase well, is really the whole thing in the final accounting. We know this by experience."

Then, time had its effect, and Dom Pothier changed his viewpoint. What should be the place of the accent in the modern measure? He stated countless times in very fine articles that the accent *closed* the measure, that it was therefore attributed to the short count, and that the final syllable of the word was the beginning of the following measure.

The entire Solesmes doctrine lay dormant in this assertion.

Dom Pothier did not carry his enlightened idea any further. We should not complain on this point. His glory is sufficient, his work fine enough that he had no need of further accomplishments.

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Dom Mocquereau, as usual, took up the question *ab ovo*. He set forth, moreover, a coherent and objective doctrine which gave us the key to Gregorian rhythm, and even to the very elementary rhythms of music:

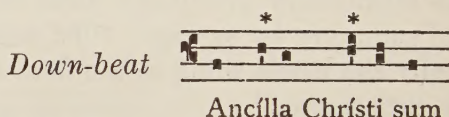
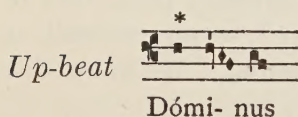
1. The tonic accent is a syllable of intensity¹; it closes the strong part of the word.

2. Its length is the same as that of the other syllables.

3. It is the *summit of the word*, the unity of which is effected by the accent, linking all the syllables together in a somewhat spiritual fashion.

Up to this point we have perfect agreement with the ideas of Dom Pothier.

4. The Latin accent occurs indifferently on both the metric beat of the rhythm and on the "off-beat", better referred to as the *up-beat*:



Here we run against a slight disagreement with Dom Pothier, modified by the evolution which we have just discussed.

Yet, we are obliged to admit the existence of the up-beat accent. It is sometimes intended by the composer with such marked deliberation that it borders on obsession:



This repetition of "light" accents is not at all by chance. The composer wished to set the accent apart, free it of all material weight and lend it a kind of spirituality which would make it the *soul of the word*.

1. Dom Mocquereau taught, however, that intensity is primarily a quality of the phrase, rather than the individual word.

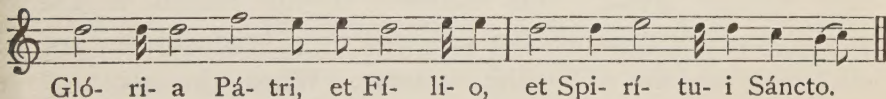
II. A Broad Observation

We do not have to show that the doctrine of Dom Mocquereau is accepted by nine tenths of all professionals. This would be superfluous.

How does it work out in practice, though? Are the disciples of Solesmes all faithful to the principles which they have been taught? Do they give *all* the Latin syllables, particularly the accent, the precise value which is due them? Is their accent spiritual? Is it, in both word and incise, the element of life and unity which is its sole reason for existence?

We would not dare to say "yes" to all this. To be sure, the intentions are the very best, and the labor given is equal to the intentions. The results, however, would call for some improvement in certain aspects.

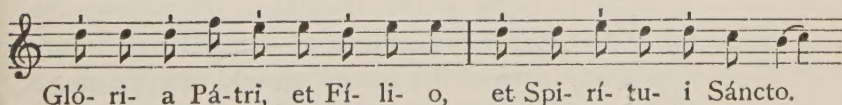
1. Let us leave out of the discussion the older cantors, whose good intentions are equalled only by their absolute ignorance of Gregorian chant. In spite of countless models given them for imitation, models which they are at a loss to even understand, they continue to sing with undeviating conviction:

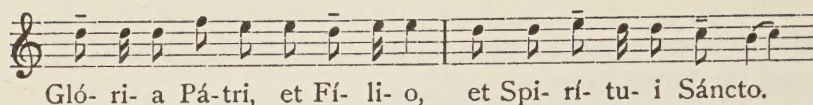


In musical evolution, as in any other, there is a limit beyond which progress will not extend.

Are all our "letter-of-the-law" chant choirs and our trained *scholas* always exempt from such flaws? We would like to think so. Let us take the same example; it will show us what remains to be accomplished.

Proper procedure:



Frequent deviation:

The dactylic penultimate is easily “short-changed”. To some persons it would seem ridiculous to grant the same time-value to it as to the accented syllable. We have heard it said a hundred times: “Cicero did not pronounce Latin in this way”. Perhaps so, but what do we really know of the question?

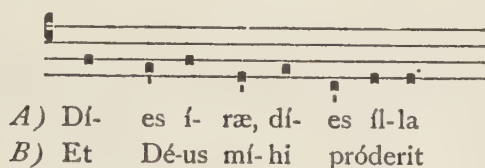
The point, moreover, is not in such remarks, and we shall touch upon it later.

2. Some very good choirs have unfortunately taken the habit of *stressing all the accents*, regardless of their positions in the plan of the rhythm.

Now when a stress is made, a tendency toward length is also brought about. This tendency toward length on the accent, moreover, is always followed by a tendency toward shortness on the following syllable. When the accented syllable of the word *Gloria* is lengthened, the weak penultimate which follows is inevitably shortened. This tendency is consistent here as elsewhere.

3. Conversely, other choirs, some of the best, treat the accent with a regrettable *dryness*. They shorten and minimize it on the basis of its not being a long syllable. This notion is unfortunate, as the accent does call for a certain amplitude. Whether it come at the up-beat or down-beat, its basic character is the same, regardless of the various treatments given it. This “soul of the word” should always make its presence felt . . . as well as its active force.

Here is a well-known melodic turn, set to two different texts with differing accentuation:



This is the same melody, the same rhythm, but a combination of two diametrically opposed syllable procedures. In Example A the accents are up-beats; in B they are down-beats.

The effect produced is very different. In the first case it is spiritual, but in the second it is material, which is not in this instance an advantage.

Moreover, the blend of the words is perfect with the light accent. The heavy accent transforms it into a simple juxtaposition of elementary groups, whose unity will always be to a certain extent artificial.

If you will but take the time, in the leisure of your study and by yourself, to sing these two texts, so similar yet so different, you will gain a better understanding of the principles of Dom Mocquereau than you would get from lengthy theoretical studies.

III. In Conclusion

Let us sum up the results of our observations. They will help to put the problems in question on solid ground. They will help to provide resolution in a more lucid outlook.

1. The accent will be long to the extent that it is violently stressed, — crushed down, as is sometimes the case. The accent should not be made into a heavy down-beat, but rather a light up-beat. Even when it coincides with the rhythmic “ictus” or down-beat, it should not be deprived of its lightness. Its power should not necessarily manifest itself in violence. The most powerful forces always act *from*

within, in the spiritual way. Alternation of power and weakness can, of course, produce a rhythm, but this is not Gregorian rhythm. In fact, this is its opposite. The tonic accent should, therefore, be lightened.

2. The weak dactylic penultimate will be shortened to the extent that the accent before it is long, violent and overpowering. The penultimate will be reduced to practically nothing at all, its value absorbed by its tyrannical neighbor.

Gregorian chant, on the other hand, gives this penultimate full consideration. Often it is even slightly longer than the neighboring syllables, including the accent.

In sum, we mean to point out that in liturgical Latin the syllables are equal, and no syllable should rob another of length. To obtain the uniform length which seems fundamental, we must balance the syllable, eliminate monopolistic accents. This balance calls for a certain equality in the elements which make up the entire art.

3. The accent will be dry and colorless to the extent that its unifying and enlivening role is overlooked. Dom Mocquereau compares it to a gently rolling hillside which is harmoniously shaped and which dominates the neighboring countryside. Far from shortening it, it is good to broaden it somewhat, even when it is on the up-beat portion of the rhythm. Flexibility, power and grace all hold forth at once when the singing is done with discretion and subtlety.

These Gregorian melodies are born of calmness and prayer. They are intended to bring supernatural sentiments to the soul. We must remember that God is not found in either upset or agitation.

COLD FACTS ON THE CONGREGATIONAL SINGING OF GREGORIAN CHANT

by J. Robert Carroll

An article which proposes to set forth "cold" facts on anything should maintain some flavor of objectivity and impersonal evaluation. This is not always easy for a musician. In an art which lies so completely outside the descriptive and analytical power of words, those few basic concepts which are conveyable in everyday language are adhered to by their partisan upholders with what amounts to sheer fanaticism. We are all subject to such attachments, whether or not we wish to be. When we hear two other persons arguing over the respective merits of two opposing points of view, we may not wish to make a black-and-white decision ourselves, but the very awareness of the opposition starts our mental machinery in motion, whether we wish it or not. We may try to defer a decision or opinion, but our intellectual curiosity and that inner compulsion to grapple with indecision drives us to select at least a temporary position.

Thus it is that composers are still fighting the battle over the admission of consecutive fifths to contemporary harmonic progressions, the discarding of the concept of traditional tonality in favor of other means of achieving large-form unity, the selection of keys in compositions which admit the notion of key-sense, and countless other ideas. Church musicians fight about the admission of solo singing, the use of the organ to accompany chant, the role of contemporary music in liturgical services, and . . . congregational singing.

It is very hard not to be swept into one camp or another by the ardor of the partisans. At times the dust of rhetoric is so thick that the music is almost lost sight of. It is, therefore, with a perfect realization of the consequences that we approach the point of this writing.

I. Congregational Participation

At the outset we are obliged to discuss a question which has been settled quite clearly for all reasonable musicians who have studied the matter, but for which the tenacity of die-hards requires a brief and pointed comment.

Rome, following traditional patterns and the historical verity of all liturgical worship in all rites, eastern and western, has stated clearly in many cases and from general principle that congregational participation in the singing of the liturgy is a desirable and functionally correct goal. Logic and history assign to the people the singing of the Ordinary parts of the services, leaving the Propers to the musicians of the choir. It is obvious that the simple responses at Mass and in the Office can be handled by a devout congregation with a minimum of training. The stumbling block seems to be the singing of the more extended parts of the Ordinary, particularly at Mass.

A short time ago, this writer published an article on this question in the official organ of the Vernacular Society of America, *Amen* (November, 1955). The response to this article demonstrated with unquestionable directness that there is a minority of our first-rank church musicians which refuses to accept the notion that congregational singing of the Ordinary is more in accord with the basic plan of the liturgy than the use of rich polyphonic settings which give the entire role to the choir. The attitude in this minority group is, in general, that the polyphonic ordinary, although it removes the possibility of congregational singing, provides music which is just as fine and liturgically suitable as any which another arrangement could conceivably supply.

We cannot question the fact that the great settings of Palestrina, Lassus, Vittoria, and their contemporaries are among the finest music ever written by man, bar none. This is augmented by the undeniable acceptance of these settings as spiritually, textually and proportionally in accord with the nature of the liturgy they enhance.

It is also true, however, that certain parts of the Ordinary were delegated to the congregation from the earliest days of the church. This is proved by references in the early *Ordos* and writings of the Fathers. Not all the Ordinary was usually sung by the congregation, however. Local variants in liturgical practice, as well as the late introduction of items such as the *Credo* require us to admit that different customs held forth in different lands and times. The principle of congregational participation is, however, clearly established. It is doubtful that anyone today could deny the general principle from a historical point of view.

From the contemporary point of view, the matter is even less doubtful. We are not bound to observe all the events of history as models for our blind imitation. The general principles are valid, but the working out must be achieved in terms which bear on our own times and which utilize our present-day means. The principle of congregational participation is valid. Its application may be different today, however, from its application in the middle ages.

In some churches in medieval times the congregation sang very little. Certain parts, such as the *Kyrie*, were intended to be variable in length to adapt to the action of the Mass. The *schola* sang these parts, therefore, since no congregation could be depended on to achieve the timing which was called for. The action could be interrupted after five *Kyries*, ten, or even twenty. The *schola*, alert and adaptable, handled the matter in most instances. The *Gloria* was usually sung by all present, but it was *not always* sung in *all* churches. The *Credo* was not used in any consistent fashion until a fairly late day . . . a time, moreover, when congregational participation was on the decline and the use of early polyphony on the rise. The *Agnus Dei* was not originally part of all Latin rites and only became established with the enforced application of the Roman rite to the entire western Church.

Today the Roman rite enjoys unprecedented uniformity in both application and practice. The intercommunication of the remotest corners of the world and the administrative

center at Rome make it possible to extend knowledge and techniques almost at will. Phonograph records and other pedagogical devices make available to persons in the most inaccessible areas the knowledge which is the fruit of the best minds of many generations. This means that we have at hand the knowledge and techniques which will enable the principle of congregational singing to be extended to a fuller application than would have been possible a few centuries ago. We have no right, then, to point at history with all its inconsistencies as the reason for adopting an indifferent attitude toward congregational singing.

The recent encyclical *Sacrae Musicae Disciplina* was seized upon by both proponents and opponents of the advancement of congregational singing as being an official sanction of their respective points of view. This merely proves once more that enthusiasm can interpret even the clearest statement with a coloration of personal viewpoints. Rome recognizes the propriety of both polyphonic settings of the Ordinary and congregationally designed ones. There is no reason to assume that this is equivalent to taking a dim view of the idea of congregational singing. Recognizing the value of polyphony is a practical attitude in the light of present unpreparedness for widespread congregational singing.

We wish to make a point of stating here that we are not discussing vernacular singing during Low Mass or similar functions. We are concerned with congregational singing of the High Mass, restricted by law to Latin.

II. The Nature of Participation

Some of those who do not wish to sacrifice their elaborate polyphonic masses to congregational participation hold that the word participation can have a broader meaning than is commonly accepted. They maintain that intelligent listening can be considered as participation of a sort.

This is true. It is, nevertheless, begging the question, for we are concerned with whether or not the congregation should participate in the *singing*, not merely the listening.

To say that a congregation that habitually listens to the fine singing of a good choir is participating in the liturgy *in the commonly accepted sense* is simply not true. There are parts, such as the Gradual, the Alleluia, the Offertory, which are extended, meditative compositions, calling for attentive listening by congregation and those clergy on the altar who are permitted by their functions to listen. These are the very parts, however, which the average polyphonic choir will sing to some abridged formula in order to get to a more elaborate motet. This is an unfortunate commentary on the attitude of our "liturgical" choirmasters.

Many choirmasters insist that the congregation which has been given the short responses to sing is fulfilling its assigned role. This meager sop to the conscience will not do. This would reduce the role of the congregation to less than what would have been the norm in most medieval churches, according to our best information. In the light of what is possible today, we cannot admit that the silent congregations of recent years come anywhere near the humblest efforts of the middle ages. We have not only the *means* to do better; we have the *obligation*.

III. Congregational Music

Much verbiage has been expended on the nature of the music which is to be given to the congregation. A large segment of our professional musicians and liturgists are in favor of passing by the Gregorian repertoire in favor of something less "strange" to the layman's ear. Chant, with its free rhythm, its modality and its characteristic neume-groups seems, to these people, to be too much for the average man-on-the-street to grasp.

It is true that one cannot begin immediately on a program of full and varied chant Ordinaries, but the difficulties involved are largely illusions in the mind of the musician. This may seem to be paradoxical, for at first reflection, we would think that the professional musician would find the chant easiest, and the completely inexperienced and untrained layman find it most difficult. This does not happen to be true.

Most of the difficulties which appear to the musician are involved with preparation for learning and singing the chant. The approach to some of the chants of the Ordinary will require serious study, reflection and familiarization, all of which takes time and effort. This leaves an impression of general difficulty on the average choirmaster which will color his approach to teaching chant to a congregation. What he does not see at first is that the chant is taught the congregation *by rote*, not by note, and that his own careful rendition of the chant as a model for imitation will be the best guarantee of sound congregational singing. The most important elements of the performance: style, tempo, articulation, phrasing — these are not matters of deciphering notation, because they surpass the power of notation to express them. They must be soundly prepared by the group which is to exemplify the chant for the congregational imitation. Then they will be transmitted as integral elements of the music the congregation will learn.

Some choirmasters maintain that the rhythmic difficulties of the chant will cause trouble at the outset. They say that the free alternation of groups of two and three, the various long notes (pressus, oriscus, etc.) and the placing of the rests will be too difficult to learn. This is not so. The congregation does not have to learn the technical differences and distinctions in Gregorian theory in order to sing. It does not have to learn 18th century counterpoint in order to sing a Bach chorale. Natural human musicality, mimicry and mnemonics will enable any average group to learn the music of a chant Ordinary in a relatively short time.

If a choirmaster pleads that his congregation sings chant badly, we can only tell him that he must supply a better quality to be imitated.

IV. Modern Music¹

We cannot overlook the possibility that our contemporary composers can provide music of liturgical character and

1. A very interesting article on this subject may be read in the March-April 1956 issue of *Caecilia*, under the authorship of Dom David Nicholson, O.S.B. (p. 78).

congregational design. The principal problem here, of course, is quality of the music, as most of our contemporary church composers already understand the basic principles of congregational style, the *populo* parts of liturgical compositions, the proportional limits of the music which must be sung within the Mass schedule, etc. It would be entirely unfair and regressive to wish to exclude the better contemporary efforts from practice in our churches.

We must recognize, however, the small proportion of high-quality music to the enormous amount produced and marketed. Here, as elsewhere, all that glitters is certainly not gold. Much has been written to serve the liturgy which is not of a standard worthy of its intent.

Unfortunately, the congregation is largely at the mercy of one or two persons in regard to choice of music. Frequently our choirmasters select the somewhat neutral ground of the "people's mass", a type of composition which fills an important role in developing congregational singing of the Ordinary, as the basis for initiating work in that direction. This kind of music is useful, but it should be supplanted by something better as soon as possible. In many instances it would be possible to go to better music at the very outset.

At a recent informal session held at the McLaughlin and Reilly rehearsal hall in Boston during the 1956 NCMEA convention, the question of contemporary musical trends was made the object of discussion, inquiry and serious listening. A number of important composers were present, and the group of participants in the discussion included both conservatives and the avant-garde. The general attitude seemed to be one of respect for contemporary efforts to bring into the scope of church music those technical developments of our day which have been accepted in serious music outside the church. This respect ranged from simple efforts toward broad-mindedness to full enthusiasm. It would seem then, from the cross-section of church musicians of all types who evinced interest in this discussion, that our contemporary church music is beginning to rise above the sterility of the

Caecilian school to something with more positive qualities to recommend it. This is a beginning, and when enough music of this kind has been written and sung, we may legitimately hope to find a few masterpieces taking their places in the repertoire of our times.

At the present writing, however, the great corpus of congregationally suitable music is that of chant. Not enough contemporary music is known or sung to establish any works as "standard" or "classical" for liturgical use. The liturgical music program, then, in adapting to the needs of congregational participation, must consider chant to be the first source of material, and this is true in the large parish as much as in the small one.

V. Conclusions

To those who have tried the experiment, the use of chant congregationally is no doubtful matter, providing the training of the choirmaster has been sufficient to reproduce the chant style accurately and artistically. For those who remain in doubt, we may point to the example of France, where, although barren areas exist, the fruit of years of work and training is beginning to produce singing congregations who perform the chant with fervor and artistry. The author has had the happy experience of working with one such congregation which knew a number of chant settings by heart, so that once the choir had begun the Kyrie, the people followed on to the end of the mass with their own enthusiastic and full-voiced singing.

Many of the difficulties met with by the average choirmaster should be attributed to his own inadequacies, not to the inability of the congregation to handle chant. Unless such purely fundamental notions as the elementary rhythm, the compound rhythm, the articulation of consonants (a very important part of chant style in the Solesmes method), the soft attack of the word-final ictus, the thetic crescendo which often links two incises, the deliberate broadening of movement when the melody leaps, the avoidance of haste in descending passages . . . unless all these are an assimilated

unit in the subconscious of the choirmaster, he will not succeed in making the congregation enjoy its participation and sense its artistic role.

Only by having confidence in the work undertaken can a choirmaster reach his goal, and this applies to the development of congregational singing. No half-way measures will do . . . no "gradual" education of the people. A strong and direct program will bear fruit, whereas uncertainty and mental reservations will produce only failure. Good intentions are not enough, of course, but given everything else, their lack will make success impossible.

THE HORIZONTAL EPISEMA

by Dom Marie Alain Riviere, O.S.B.

INTRODUCTION

Among the Solesmes rhythmic signs there is one in particular about which little is said, but about which there is certainly much to be said. This sign is the horizontal episema.

This is the only sign of the system, to be sure, which is found as such in the manuscripts. It is, then, less necessary to justify it, and it may be for this reason that so little attention has been given to its role in the chant up to now.

It is nevertheless true that its interpretation is not carried off without some difficulty, in the light of the great number of varying shadings which it can be given.

The ancient musicians, in fact, were content to use a very rudimentary notation in transmitting their melodies, and they saw no need of marking every subtle shading with a distinctive sign. They used, moreover, a single quantitative concept for expressive notation, and they indicated length, however diverse these modifications might be. Therefore, just as in the case of the "in campo aperto" neumes, the episema in the manuscripts was merely a memory-aid, intended to be understood and clarified by oral tradition.

For us, however, the breaking off of this tradition for so many centuries makes it very difficult to determine with any exactitude the meaning of all these episemas. At the most we can be sure only that their presence indicates that there is something called for, but to say for certain what this "something" is, we have no other resource than to make a minute study of the text and melody with the aid of certain pale-

ographic facts and in the light of the great musical, esthetic and religious principles which always hold true.

This method, of course, will not necessarily give us all the subtleties of the *original* performance, but it will suffice to show us the principles of a *correct* performance, which, instead of hampering the expression and rhythm, as so often happens, will be conducive to shaping and shadowing the interpretation.

It is this study which we wish to outline here, without, however, pretending to exhaust the subject.

Let us first, then, try to define the exact relationship of the episema with length and with the rhythm; then we shall inquire into what its role should be in the interpretation of chant.

I.

THE EPISEMA AND LENGTH

FIRST PRINCIPLE: IN ITSELF, THE EPISEMA IS PRIMARILY A SIGN OF EXPRESSION; IT IS NOT A SIGN OF LENGTH *PER SE*.

This stems from what we have just said about the origin of the episema, and the application of length is only one means among others of showing this expression.

We must recognize, however, that this means is well-chosen, for, in fact, expression is always rendered with a certain broadening of the tempo. If, then, a pure and simple lengthening is not the aim of the episema, it is at least an unavoidable consequence of it which it would be wrong to wish to eliminate completely, for this would threaten to eliminate the expression in the same stroke. This expression is the true effect of the episema.

In practice, then, it will be advantageous to bear in mind the positive side of the principle when singing: the episema is a sign of expression; rather than its negative aspect: it is

not a sign of length.¹

The only pitfall to be avoided is a purely mathematical lengthening which not only would add to the expression, but would, on the contrary, have the effect of killing it completely.

SECOND PRINCIPLE: WHEN THE EPISEMA IS USED TO FORM A CADENCE, IT IS MERELY A LENGTHENING.

In this case, contrasting with the above, it would be impossible to give the episema any expressive value. It therefore marks only the lengthening of the cadence.

a) *Cadence on a single note.* In Gregorian chant there is a system of musical punctuation which corresponds to the rhythmic system of phrases, members, incises, etc.

This system uses the episema to mark the shortest pauses, corresponding to the incises:

The significance of this cadence is relative, and it is difficult to give it an absolute and immutable measure, since it should be proportional to the other cadences. These other cadences, in turn, depend on the importance of the piece, its size, its general cast . . . all very variable and diverse factors.

For all practical purposes, the episema can be considered to double the cadence note. It can be somewhat shorter than this, but in such a case we must avoid the tendency to cut it off too abruptly and to hurry into the following passage with the idea of not lengthening the episema as much as we would a dotted note. The distinction between the note with the episema and the dotted note is not so strict, moreover, as to prevent our using them interchangeably. Therefore a dotted note is printed regularly in place of an episematic note each time the cadence note is to be followed immediately by an ictic note. Then, too, since these two signs in our modern

1. The preface of the *Monastic Antiphonary* states clearly, in fact, that the notes marked with the episema should be "*paululum producendas*", and although it adds "*quin duplicentur*", we must understand that the intention of the editors was as though to add the word "*necessario*", to read "*quin necessario duplicentur*", which is the sense when we read between the lines.

editions represent the same episema in the manuscript, there is no point in being too scrupulous in this affair.

b) *Two-note cadence.* In the same way, when the episema is over a podatus or clivis at the cadence, we should not be afraid to carry over some of the length of the first note to the second, even if to put an ictus on this second note. In fact, it is very hard not to slight the second note when we observe the rhythm strictly. It is better, then, to risk modifying the rhythm rather than to give the impression of precipitation.

c) *Cadence torculus.* Quite often the ordinary spondaic cadence:



is embellished through the replacement by an episematic torculus of the first of the two dotted notes:

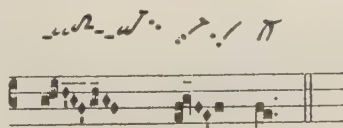


Here we have a simple ornamentation which gives a musical development to the arsic elan of this note. It is like a last rebound of the voice before the final coming to rest.

It would, therefore, be bad to sing these three notes heavily, as though each carried an ictus. On the contrary, all the force of the lengthening should be on the first, and the other two should simply be broadened and shaped in proportion to the first.



d) *Cadence formulas.* We also find the episema in the standard formulas which are used to close certain pieces. It helps to show the natural slowing down which should precede the final note.





Note its placement on the melodic summits. It is put there as a kind of "emergency brake" at each of the important points in order to prevent the singing from running on too rapidly and in order to regulate, as it were, the final retard by giving it solid points of articulation.

THIRD PRINCIPLE: THE INFLUENCE OF THE EPISEMA IS NOT, GENERALLY SPEAKING, STRICTLY LIMITED TO THE NOTES WHICH IT MARKS.

Thus, when a clivis or a podatus carry an episema on the first note, it would be antimusical to try to take up the original tempo immediately on the second note.

Moreover, certain manuscripts give us valuable information from this point of view when they use, to render the episema of St. Gall, the procedure of separation of the neumelements, consisting of writing the notes which usually make a single melodic figure as separate points:

S. Gall:  Laon:  instead of 

It is clear from this, therefore, that the effect of the episema is extended to the entire neume, and it would seem, too, according to the notation as it appears, that this is applied without any preference whatsoever for one or another of the notes involved.

Nevertheless, as we shall see later on in the discussion of the rhythm, it is the ictic note which carries most of the effect of this lengthening, and the others merely participate more or less in it.

In practice, passages like the following should be sung, therefore, with a very expressive and broad cantando which will take in the entire melodic line, although without subordinating its rhythmic structure:

Ant. *Spiritus Dñi.*



Re-plé- vit orbem ter-

Comm. *Tollite.*



ad-o-rá- te Dó-mi- num

II.

THE EPISEMA AND THE RHYTHM

GENERAL PRINCIPLE: IN ITSELF, THE EPISEMA DOES NOT MODIFY THE RHYTHM.

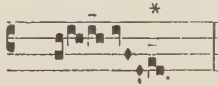
EXCEPTION: WHEN NO OTHER RHYTHMIC FACTOR INTERVENES, THE EPISEMA CAN BE CONSIDERED AS A LONG NOTE WHICH NORMALLY TAKES THE ICTUS.

The latter is the case in pure melismas, for example

1) When an episematic note is not immediately followed by any long note:



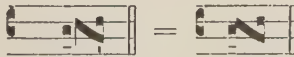
in which case the two episemas certainly take the ictus. On the other hand, however, in cases like the following:



the episema is not ictic.

2) When the episema is over an isolated note which precedes a neume of at least three notes, all belonging to the same syllable.¹

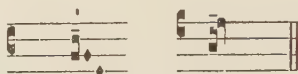
In this case the episema takes the ictus and practically becomes the first note of the following neume:



1. In the *Graduale* this note is isolated because it is long, but it does not have an episema printed over it. In the *Monastic Antiphonary* and in the Responsories of Christmas and those for Holy Week, it has a printed episema *underneath* the note itself, but the ictus is not indicated because this would overload the typography. It is suggested in most instances through deduction by placing an ictus mark on the nearest neighboring ictus.

3) When the episema is on the *upper* note of a podatus.

In this case it affects only the second note, and by this process takes the ictus, since it is a long note in contrast with the short first note of the neume:



A. *Non-ictic episema*

PRINCIPLE: ON THE NON-ICTIC PART OF THE RHYTHM, THE EPISEMA EMPHASIZES THE QUALITIES OF THE ARSIS WHICH TEND TOWARD BREADTH; IT SHOULD NOT, THEREFORE, BE DEFORMED BY EXAGGERATED LENGTHENING WHICH WOULD THREATEN TO DISPLACE THE ICTUS.

There is nothing more in character with the Gregorian idiom than this breadth, this "soaring" of the rhythmic elan, particularly when it coincides with the Latin accent.

Yet, the use of the episema in such a case is relatively rare. We can find three applications of it:

a) *On the accent*, where both the musical and textual rhythms blend perfectly.

This is the most frequent case and the most expressive one.

Here the episema emphasizes the accent caressingly by holding back slightly the soft drop to the ictus. It makes one think of a pole-vaulter whose arc through the air seems to suspend him a brief instant at the height of his leap before he drops back to the ground:

Care must be taken not to deprive this type of passage of its delicacy, either by brusqueness and haste, as though to drop the note as soon as it is sung, or by a heaviness which would make the arsis into a thesis.

b) *Before a long note*: Pressus, unison oriscus or strophicus.

The episema simply reminds one through emphasis of

the nuance of the usual chant style in such cases, which consists of avoiding an abrupt leap to the long note by slightly broadening the preceding note:



In this case the episema may or may not coincide with the accent. If it does, we have a procedure often used by the composer to bring out the non-ictic accent, and we return to a type discussed under section (a).

c) *Apart from the accent.*

Usually the case involves an instance where the composer wishes to bring out the expressive importance of a liquescent note with something more powerful than an ordinary liquescent neume:

Rex pacificus Quem vidistis Quid faciam

Here we should observe, therefore, the same principles for performance as for the liquescence, that is, a very clear articulation, but with added deliberateness which the liquescent would not call for in itself.

Sometimes, too, the non-ictic episema immediately precedes a word which it serves to set in relief by distinguishing it from what precedes it, somewhat as when a speaker would pause an instant before saying something important which he wished to stress:

ut saluum Propria virtute caelestia regna

The same thing occurs in the middle of a word when the episema precedes the accent:

As-satum est Mi-rabile mysterium

This is a stylistic nuance highly characteristic of Gregorian chant, which detaches and emphasizes the accent by delaying it very slightly.

Here, therefore, more than ever, we must avoid lengthening the episema too much. In this case it is, in sum, a negative sign, a reminder not to hurry, to phrase carefully without "telescoping" the words or syllables.

We should not, however, feel obliged to leap to the following notes with the intention of avoiding excessive lengthening. The episema is here precisely for avoiding this fault and to serve as a kind of deterrent.

B. *Episema on the Ictus*

PRINCIPLE: BECAUSE OF ITS AFFINITY WITH LENGTH, THE DOWN-BEAT OF THE RHYTHM HAS A VERY NATURAL APTITUDE FOR TAKING THE EPISEMA; A MARKED LENGTHENING, THEREFORE, DOES NOT PRESENT ANY DANGERS OF ALTERING THE RHYTHM.

a) *Thetic ictuses*. The most natural case is where the episema brings out a thetic fall of the melody, as, for example, in the following cases:¹

Grad. *Propter veritatem*. 

All. *Caro mea*. 

Ant. *Nativitas tua*. 

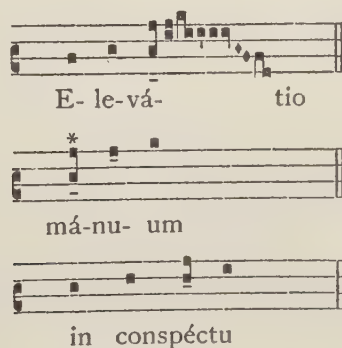
1. Let us state once and for all that we take our examples freely from the *Monastic Antiphonary* as well as the *Vatican Antiphonary*, adding as the case may be the episemas indicated in the manuscripts where they lend clarity to our discussion, even when they are not marked in the published editions.

It is to this principle, too, that we can trace the tendency of most choirs to slightly lengthen the thetic falls, even when no episema is given, as, for example, in the simple *Salve Regina* at *illos tuos*; this is a very natural tendency which should not be entirely eliminated, since attempts to eliminate it may result in a hurried and ungraceful interpretation.

By extension the thetic ictuses of a cadence are often similarly marked with the episema, even if the melodic fall is not as pronounced. We have seen, too, how the episema checks the elan of the typical cadence-formulas which end certain pieces (discussed above).

b) *Arsic ictuses*. Even when we have the case of an arsic ictus, it is not rare to find an episema on the rhythmic ictus.

Quite often we find (in the manuscripts, at least) an episema under the first note of the podatus on a word accent, for example, in these three passages from the Gradual *Dirigatur*:



This is a very interesting nuance for the correct Gregorian style of performing the podatus in general. The modern habit, in fact, is to tend to shorten the first note in order to bring more importance to the second, particularly when this latter is the melodic summit of the melodic curve in question.

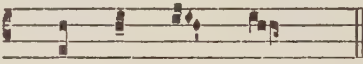
True Gregorian style, reserved in character, directs, on the contrary, all the vocal emphasis to the ictic note, the basis

of the rhythmic elan, and then passes softly and smoothly to the upper note as though this second note were an outgrowth of the first.

Here, then, once more, the episema is a reminder of the true Gregorian style, without, of course, losing its particularly expressive character which it focuses on the melodic elan.


The episema is found, moreover, not only on the accent, although this is the most frequent case, but also in instances where the melody simply makes a more vigorous upsurge. It happens in such cases, in the manuscripts in any event, that the episema is marked over not merely a single ictus, but over an entire series of them, which may be viewed as a system of springboards of the growing rhythm and intensity.

Grad. *Benedictus Dominus.*



Su- scí- pi- ant

Offert. *Anima nostra.*



E- ré- pta est

In sum, whether it falls on the arsis or thesis, the episema emphasizes the role of the ictus and aids in its expression. Like the ictus, the episema helps the forward movement to attain its impetus, or, on the other hand, reins it in when it approaches its close, just as the steps of a horse in full gallop draw him forward while he runs toward the finish of a race, whereas they help him to stop after he passes the line (Dom Gajard, *Notions de rythmique*, p. 33).

We can see how the episema, understood in this way, in no way endangers the movement of the melody, since, on the contrary, it is this very episema which helps it attain its proper form.

In all these cases there is no danger of transforming the rhythm through overlengthening of the episema, since, even

if this is done to a point of actually doubling the note, we can always count "one", taking it as a slowing of the tempo. We are not supposed to change binary beats to a ternary, in strict analysis, nor place a second ictus on the second note of a ternary beat.

Briefly, then, do not permit the episema to become a heavy, stagnant note in which the melody is bogged down, but rather try to preserve its elasticity and "spring". This is the whole secret of its proper rendition.

C. *The Episema and the Compound Beat*

Having thus set forth the principles of performing the episema when it coincides with the elan, then with the fall of the rhythm, it will suffice to simply apply these principles when we are faced with a compound beat which is entirely included under the episema.

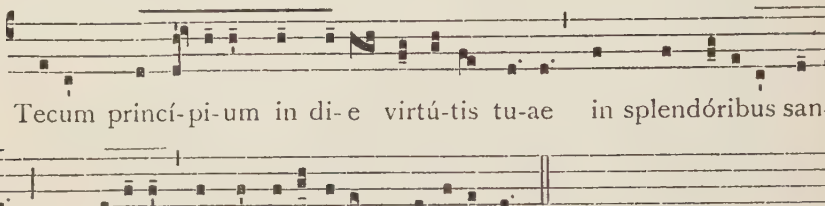
We should distinguish two types of formation, however, depending on whether the melody is syllabic or melismatic.

a) *Syllabic melody*. This is the more difficult case, because of the graphic system used by the old scribes and still maintained in our modern printed editions. This consists of marking each separate note with a separate episema instead of extending this line over all the notes intended to be included. From this discrepancy has come the appearance of fragmentation and separation which endangers the general movement of the phrase without expressive gain.

Actually it is a case of a *cantando* nuance which would be better expressed with a single horizontal line extended over the entire compound beat.

In whatever way it is expressed, in any case, care should be taken to avoid the separation of the neume elements and to maintain the clearly determined role of each note as arsis or thesis.

To attain the proper execution, we can use a little exercise which consists of studying the piece first without considering the episemas, then singing it in a broader movement with greater warmth and expression, which is all the composer intended in adding all these signs to his melody:

Ant. 

Tecum princí-pi-um in di-e virtú-tis tu-ae in splendóribus san-
ctórum : ex útero ante luci-ferum génu-i te.

b) *Melismatic melody.* We have already discussed the cadence torculus. Here again it will suffice to take care to maintain the rhythm while emphasizing the ictic note a little more. Those which follow the ictic note will be treated as though they were its extension and echo.

D. The Episema and the Greater Rhythm

PRINCIPLE: THROUGH ITS INFLUENCE ON THE TEMPO AND ITS USE IN THE SYSTEM OF PAUSES, THE EPISEMA IS AN ELEMENT OF GREATER RHYTHM; IT HAS, TOO, AS SUCH, A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE GENERAL SYNTHESIS.

a) *Influence on the tempo.*

1. *The episema and the movement.* We have noted how the expression, for which the episema is the sign, is naturally transmitted by a broadening of the tempo. This fact will necessarily have repercussions on the movement of the phrase in general, which should be slower in proportion to the expressive quality of the melody.

Thus the antiphon *Tecum principium* just cited will be sung in a very solemn tempo because of the large number of episemas which are liberally applied to it. On the other hand, the antiphons *Redemptionem* and *Exortum est* which

follow it in the same Office and which are practically unornamented, will be sung quite lightly.

Here we have an element of interpretation which we cannot ignore. We shall do well, if possible, to find out what the manuscripts can tell us in this regard before trying to determine a tempo,¹ for very often the true intentions of the ancient musicians can be found only in the manuscripts. The majority of our present-day books are far from presenting a faithful and complete version of all the nuances for singing these melodies.²

2. *The episema and proportion.* The episema is again an element of greater rhythm through the influence it can have on the general balance of a piece, when, for example, the breadth it can give to one phrase helps establish a proportion between the musical sections which would not exist otherwise.

In the following piece:

Dominus veniet, occurrite illi dicentes:

Magnum Principium, et regni ejus non erit finis.

Deus, fortis, dominator.

Princeps pacis, alleluia, alleluia.

in which the first two phrases would be considerably out-of-proportion to the two latter ones, the episemas which are heavily applied to the shorter phrases make up to a great extent for their brevity, thus giving the whole piece the effect of a nearly metrical balance.

1. Although few persons have access to the *Paleographie Musicale*, very ample information can be found on this subject in the commentaries of writers like Dom Gajard, Dom Baron, etc.
2. Here we must note the particular difficulty which is met with in Benedictine monasteries because of the simultaneous use of three different editions: that of the *Responsoriale* which has no rhythmic signs of any kind, that of the *Graduale* in which the episemas are at a minimum, and that of the *Antiphonale* which gives all the episemas.

Under such conditions, how can a precise and determined evaluation of the expressive signs be made?

In the same way:

*Jam hiems transiit
Imber abiit et recessit;
Surge amica mea
Et veni.*

the melody of this antiphon and the episemas which shape and ornament the fourth member suffice to make it a little masterpiece of proportion:



It is this sense of order which the composers always use when a melody is converted into neumes to adapt a formerly syllabic tune to a much shorter second text.

The episema serves in such cases to compensate for what is missing, and it adds grace in this way to whatever awkwardness the melody might have incurred:



In such cases we should note how skilled the composer's art can be in succeeding nearly always in making the expression coincide with this purely material procedure.

b) *Role in the unity of the incises.*

We have seen previously how the episema is used in the system of divisional pauses to mark incises. Let us now consider it from the point of view of the greater rhythm.

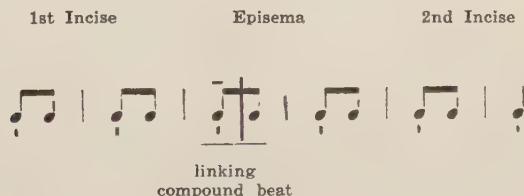
Its role has two aspects which are the very ones which characterize the rhythmic synthesis: *to separate*, but to *separate* in order to *unite*.

Separation. This is indeed the first result of the pauses. They divide the phrase into sections according to our intellectual capacities, in order to set forth for our understanding the substance of the rhythmic plan of the music.

The divisional pause, then, is for the greater rhythm what the ictus is on the scale of elementary rhythm.

Unity. But just as the ictus is the conclusion of a rhythm and, by the juxtaposition of several rhythms, becomes the beginning of the rhythms which follow, the pivot of the rhythmic synthesis and the link of articulation upon which it rests, so, too, the episema of the cadence marks both the end of one incise and the beginning of the next.

Moreover, the episema governs a compound beat which unites the conclusion of the last rhythm of the first incise with the beginning of the first rhythm of the second incise. This compound beat is, therefore, extended over the joint of both incisives which it links to each other, although it still serves to separate them. This is what Dom Mocquereau referred to as “linking together by compound beats”.



Sometimes this compound beat is a neume, and it happens that the episema covers it entirely.

GREGORIAN REVIEW

It is this long “conductus” neume, which is so named because it has the role of “conducting” the movement between the two elements which it links:

Grad. *Constitues.*

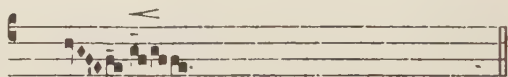


Dó- mi- ne

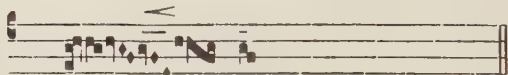
Off. *Benedictus
qui venit.*



in nó- mi- ne Dó- mi- ni



Rq. *Judaea.*



rit

In performance it will be sensed that the whole melodic and rhythmic flow, far from being interrupted by the episema, swells forward like a rising wave which will roll on until it reaches the height toward which it tends.

(to be continued)

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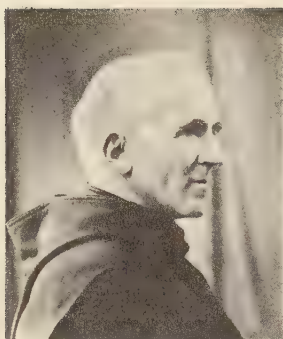
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